



Tri-Town Bike Committee Meeting

Date: February 21, 2024.

Time: 7:15 PM – 9:15 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes

Attendees:

- Arlington: Town: John Alessi., Bicycle Advisory Committee: Christopher Tonkin (Chair)., Linda Epstein., Jack Johnson., Doug Mayo-Wells., Adam MacNeill., Scott Smith.; Members of the Public: Rod Holland., Stephan Miller., Anton R.
- Bedford: Bicycle Advisory Committee: Peter Weichman (Chair).
- Lexington: Bicycle Advisory Committee: Betty J Gau (Chair)., David Armstrong., James Cadenhead., Suzan (Xuan) Chen., Thomas Shiple.; Members of the Public: Cynthia Pfieffer., Mike Tabaczynski.

1. Greetings and introductions, ground rules for online meetings.

Christopher Tonkin notifies attendees that ABAC has a quorum present. Therefore, the meeting is held online pursuant to the order of Governor (as extended) and Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes. The meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved. Tonkin confirms the committee members and others in attendance for the meeting.

2. Updates from Each Community.

a. Lexington

MWRA will be closing the bikeway between Bow and Maple street. The Lexington Bike Advisory Committee worked extensively to minimize impact on cyclists:

- Closures will not impact 2025 Bikeway celebration.
- Work will be performed between Nov 2025 - May 2026. If possible the Bikeway may be opened on weekends.
- Detour will include striped green paint on Mass Ave, safety measures at intersections, and police/safety guard support.

Jim Cadenhead notes that this is a substantial improvement over the previous closure near Seasons Four (contraflow). These will be lanes on the street with paint (and could be a precursor for the installation of permanent bike lanes.)

Jim Cadenhead reports on the Bikeway Block Party, organized by the Friends of the Lexington Bikeway for Sunday September 15. Every available location (e.g., parks) from Alewife to Bedford Depot will become a venue for a wide variety of art, craft, and sport events. Coordinating with public works and the Arlington Economic Development council. 6 venue locations in Lexington and 5 in Arlington have been proposed. This community event will be inclusive and non-commercial, and prioritize local artist/artisans. Bikewayblockparty@gmail.com is the contact address. QR code:



b. Arlington

John Alessi has joined as the Town's Senior Transportation planner. Notable current/planned projects include:

- Installing a facility for storage/rental of adaptive cycles.
- Installing courtesy signs as adopted by Lexington.
- Mass Ave / Appleton concept is approved and moving to final engineering design phase.
- Mystic River Path/Bikeway connection project design is under way.
- Installing bike lanes on Rt. 60/Pleasant St.
- Updating the bike design matrix used to identify when bike facilitation can be introduced as part of road maintenance or changes.
- Arlington town day is September 21. ABAC will again share a booth with the Transportation Advisory Committee.

c. Bedford

Four bikeway safety signs have been installed. The town has experienced recent issues with snow removal. The Reformatory Branch project will not be moving forward, having failed to secure the required 2/3 majority vote, due to right-of-way issues.

3. E-bike legislation discussion, encouraging better behavior on the bikeway.

Christopher Tonkin notes that Arlington regularly receives correspondence describing discourteous and dangerous operation on the bikeway, particularly of powered and pedal-assist vehicles. Rod Holland mentions that Bluebikes will be adding pedal assist bicycles.

Scott Smith mentions that expectations on the Minuteman – one of the longer paths in the Boston metro area – are substantially different from the Somerville Community path. (People are going to want to go faster). However there is room for education – suggest keeping ebikes on “setting 2” (approx 12mph). The new legislation does give towns authority to set speed limits.

Betty Gau mentions that Lexington has 15pm (advisory) signs.

Jim Cadenhead points out that from a risk assessment perspective, riding on the bikeway is better than driving a motor vehicle on roads. Posting behavioral guidance is one of the best things our committees can do to benefit our communities. He also suggests community outreach to Strava, to see if they can remove competitive timed sections from the bikeway.

Rod Holland mentions recent experience on the Green Line and Community Path Extension, which is not as flat as most rail trails it has varying grades. Ebikes can be of substantial benefit to riders. The Minuteman itself is not hilly, but riders leaving it (e.g., to go home) will encounter steeper grades.

Doug Mayo-Wells mentions that even if risk of a serious crash is low compared to roadways, we should still seek to minimize it. Has had more than one near-miss of a head-on collision, most recently in the cobblestone underpass area at Alewife station, which resulted in a solo bike crash and minor injuries.

Dave Armstrong points out that the issue is not of ebikes per-se, but of general behavior. The Minuteman is not a good place for people training for races; in the long term we need alternatives to the bikeway for people on faster vehicles (powered or not). He raises the question of whether widening the bikeway may be possible in some areas.

Christopher Tonkin explains that the right-of-way issues make widening the Minuteman extremely challenging, although it may be possible to increase the effective area via grading/trimming brush. However, bridge abutments would be extremely expensive to relocate.

Anton R. raises the issue of lighting on the Bikeway.

Xuan Chen has been looking into reflectors as a potential alternative to active lighting.

4. Future of MinutemanBikeway.org Website.

Stephan Miller has been maintaining the <http://minutemanbikeway.org/> website for a decade, and is interested in transferring the site to someone more connected to the local bicycle scene. It's a Wordpress site, and the domain name is registered to the Arlington Planning Department. Hosting costs are approximately \$50/yr and the domain registration is approximately \$35/yr. Updating the site typically takes less than 1 hr/week. Making it more static could also be an option. It is likely valuable to maintain a web presence that is not subject to arbitrary changes in popularity, as Twitter/X and Facebook have encountered. Anyone interested should contact Christopher Tonkin.

5. Vision for joint town bikeway projects.

Christopher Tonkin mentions that active bikeway lighting may be more feasible now, with LEDs that require less power, and lighting designs that create less light pollution. It may also be possible to direct light to the bikeway from other sources; lighting for the Arlington High School sports facilities also illuminates the bikeway (by design).

Betty Gau is interested in reflective materials, ideally on both the centerline and sides.

Christopher Tonkin notes that Arlington is trying to prioritize restriping in the near future. The crosswalk/safety enhancements implemented by Trader Joe's/near the Lexington border have completely worn away. It would be good to understand the additional cost of reflective paint. There are quite steep dropoffs from the edge of the Bikeway in places, so edge marking would be very beneficial.

Betty Gau mentions that as this a safety issue ARPA funding may be available. She suggests reflective lighting as potential pilot project for the 3 towns.

Jim Cadenhead mentions experience with hooded solar-powered lights. These worked well but introduced an unforeseen hazard, it's easy to ride too fast for conditions - you may encounter pedestrians, dogs with leashes stretched across the path etc. who are not wearing reflective gear, and have inadequate time to react.

Linda Epstein mentions that education for cyclists on how/when to use lights could be beneficial (e.g., earlier in winter, not using white lights on the rear of the bike.) She also suggests assessing whether the reflective paint is more slippery.

Doug Mayo-Wells asks if cat eye reflectors might be an alternative to reflective paint; Chris Tonkin says likely not, because plows tend to hit them.

Christopher Tonkin mentions encountering reflective signs with numbered location indicators to add emergency responders. He wonders if these could be adopted not just for the Minuteman, but through Massachusetts. Betty Gau suggests contacting Galen Mook on this issue.

Betty Gau inquires whether the bikeway communities can get better data on usage patterns. Christopher Tonkin mentions that Arlington has an automated counter near the town center. Betty Gau says Lexington has one as well, but reliability has been an issue. Stephan Miller mentions that Everywhere Arlington Liveable Streets also does manual counts and has roughly a decade of data.

6. Other business.

ABAC voted to approve the November and January minutes. Proposed by Christopher Tonkin, seconded by Adam MacNeill, carried unanimously.

Anton R raises the issue of winter clearing of the bike trail. After snow is removed, ice often forms. Christopher Tonkin notes that sanding/salting is not possible because of wetland restrictions. Scott Smith notes that sidewalk clearing is a good predictor: if residents are having trouble removing ice, the bikeway is likely to be icy as well. Stephan Miller recommends studded tires. This is not a practical solution for younger riders.

June 26th is proposed for the next Tri Town meeting.

Adjourned.